

TIPS TO HELP YOU CHOOSE

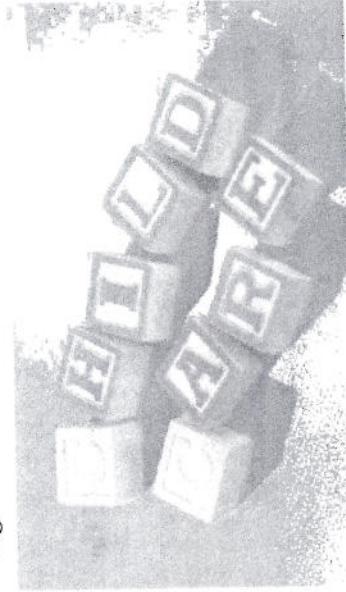
- Save yourself frustration by taking the time now to do a careful childcare search
- Make your goal to find the best quality of care for your child and consider both center and home-based care.
- Visit the childcare program for at least an hour, visit more than once, and visit with and without your child.
- Ask for a tour of the program so you can see where children will eat, sleep, and play.
- Ask for references of families who have used the program
- Be sure to understand anything you sign and get a copy. Written agreements help parents and caregivers know what is expected of each.
- Ask for a copy of the program's philosophy or purpose.
- Have a backup plan for childcare in case your needs or the care changes.
- Always pay attention to the signals your child is giving to you.

To check on licensing rules or program status or file complaints call the Virginia Department of Social Services at

703 057 7690

Keeping Your Childcare

- Communicate daily with your caregiver either in person or in writing.
- Show that you appreciate your child's caregiver.
- Respect the program's policies and procedures and always pay on time.
- Don't let concerns build up. Communicate them to your caregiver as soon as possible but avoid an accusing tone.
- Tell the caregiver about any changes in your child's health
- Tell the caregiver about any changes, which affect your child (e.g. divorce, etc.)
- Stay involved with your childcare program and volunteer when you can.
- At times visit the program unannounced.
- Get to know other parents in the program and work together to keep the quality of care high.



Child Care Link

Council of Community Services
P.O. Box 598
Roanoke, VA 24004

(540) 985-0131 Ext. 300
(800) 354-3388 Ext. 300

www.councilofcommunityservices.org

childcarelink@councilofcommunityservices.org

**COUNCIL of
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

Gateway to information and planning.



Checklist to Help You Choose

Is the program licensed and does it at least meet state ratios?

- * Remember licensing rules are minimum health and safety requirements not quality standards.
- * Ask to see the program's latest inspection report.

Family Child Care Homes

- ☑ Do not have to be licensed in Virginia if they have 5 or fewer children.
- ☑ However they may be *Voluntarily Registered* which means they have met state standards.
- ☑ A licensed home may care for up to a 12 children.

- The maximum number of children is determined by points.

Each adult cannot go over 16 points.
Infants are 4 points. Toddlers 3 points.
Preschoolers 2 points. School age 1 point.

Child Care Centers

- ☑ Must be licensed if caring for thirteen or more children.
- ☑ Religious exempt centers, even though they are not licensed, must meet certain state requirements.

1 adult per 4 children: birth to 15 months

1 adult per 5 children: 16 months to 24 months

1 adult per 8 children: 2 years

1 adult per 10 children: 3 to 5 years

School age:

1 adult per 18 children: 5 to 8 years

1 adult per 20 children: over 9 years

Does the program meet the state adult-to-child ratio?

- * Higher quality programs have fewer children per adult.

☑ **Is the program nationally accredited?**

- * Programs which meet national accreditation standards meet higher standards than state requirements.

☑ **Does the size of the group your child will be in seem about right?**

☑ **Does the home provider or staff have training in child development, early childhood education, and CPR/First Aid?**

- * Ask: *What are the minimum qualifications for the program's staff?*
- * Studies indicate that trained teachers provide a higher quality of care.

☑ **Is there a low turnover rate for teachers in the program?**

- * Studies indicate that a high turnover rate affect's children's development.

☑ **Does the program's discipline policy promote children's self-esteem through positive words and actions?**

- * Physical punishment or harsh/demeaning practices are not allowed in licensed programs.

☑ **Does the caregiver/teacher seem to enjoy being with children?**

☑ **Were you greeted when you entered the program?**

☑ **Do you feel you could talk to the caregiver/teacher openly about any questions you might have?**

☑ **Is there a planned program with lots of choices for children and opportunities for learning through play?**

- * Television watching should be kept to a minimum and be educational in nature.
- * "What would a typical day be like for my child?"

☑ **Is the setting safe, bright and cheerful with enough toys, books and materials?**

- * Check for fenced yards, toys/equipment in good repair, pet safety, pool safety, good health practices (e.g. such as hand washing before/after diapering and mealtimes) and a non-smoking/drug free environment.

☑ **Does the program have plans for security as well as fire and other emergencies?**

☑ **Are procedures in place to insure that only authorized persons can pick up your child?**

☑ **Are parents allowed to drop in unannounced at any time to visit their child?**

☑ **Are there staff members at the program who share your culture and language?**

Personal Considerations

☑ **Is the program affordable for you?**

- * How will payment be made?
- * Are there extra fees?

☑ **Does the program's hours of operation work with your schedule?**

☑ **What will happen if you are late picking up your child?**

- * *Keep a copy of your parent handbook and signed*